

A

# REVIEW

## OF THE

# STATE

## OF THE

# BRITISH NATION.

---

Saturday, April 19. 1707.

---

**M**Y last brought the Infancy of the Reformation in *England* to Light, and withal shew'd, how the Seeds of our present Differences were sown, even in the very first Steps of pulling down Popery; so fatal has been the Error in the first Concoction, that it has never been capable of Rectification in all the future Ages of the Church.

The *Regale* and *Pontificate* were the two early Mistakes in, and are to this Day the two principal Objections against the Protestant Reformation of the *English* Church; I have shown you where they began, how they came to be so mix'd with, and riveted in the first Reformation, as that they could never arrive to a Regulation or Alteration to this Day: I shall next pursue the several Degrees, by which our Disputes on these Points have arriv'd to that Height we have

since seen them at, and by which those Heights, after having been carry'd on to sad Extremities on every side, seem now to be brought by the Help of a gentle Government, inclin'd to Peace and Moderation, to a stated settled Point, in which each Party enjoys Liberty establish'd by Treaty and Capitulation, without the Power of invading or encroaching upon one another; a Circumstance which in our unhappy divided State is a Blessing, no Man can look back upon without Thankfulness and Joy; who can reflect upon what miserable Destruction, our Divisions have made among us! — And thus I shall bring this Head of Religion, just where I shall endeavour to center all the rest, *Viz.* THE UNION.

The first Dispute, we find in the reform'd Church, began at *Frankfort* in *Germany*, where the banish'd *English* Protestants broke out

out into an unhappy Feud about the Use of the *English* Service and Ceremonies, and the famous Breach between Bishop *Hooper*, and Bishop *Ridley* upon this Head is too well known to need that I should repeat any thing of it.

But Fire and Faggot reconcil'd all little Differences, and they both dy'd gloriously for the Faith, not the Ceremonies of the Protestant Religion.

I would be glad our Fomenters of Differences and Distrusts between Protestants, whether in *Scotland* or in *England*, would take this Hint; one common Enemy would reconcile us all, one Incurſion of *French* or *Jacobite* Tyranny would make us all Brethren, cement and unite us, and make us lay aside all our Disputes; 'tis hard, nothing but Afflictions can instruct Protestants to Union and Peace, Love and Charity one among another.

I wish our Brethren in *Scotland*, who talk of the fatal Consequences of this Union, could reflect, how it would have far'd with them, and what they have to be thankful for, that it was not so; if this Union had commenc'd in the Time of Episcopal Government in *Scotland*, had it been propos'd then, it might well have startled them, and the Sinfulness of the Union would have been a proper Subject for Mr. *Webster*, or any body else; for their Presbyterian Establishment had been entirely fore-clos'd, and they had been but as *Dissenters* for ever hereafter.

But this is but a Digression, tho' I hope a very useful one.

After the Persecution in Queen *Mary's* Time, Queen *Elizabeth* restor'd the Protestant Church, but as before the civil Authority taking upon it to impose Ceremonies, the Queen, whether politickly as some say, if possible to bring the Papists in as Occasional Conformists, or from her own Gayness of Temper, which was pleas'd too much with the Pomp of Worship, I shall not determine; but She rather went back again in the Reformation, than carry'd it on farther; I mean respecting King *Edward's* Standard.

Several Offers were made in her Reign for a farther Reformation, but this Queen, tho' She was a glorious Princess, had also a

great Deal of her Father in Her, and it may be said without any Diminution of Her, that excepting that she had acted all for the People's Good, she would have pass'd for one of the most arbitrary Tyrants of all our Sovereigns, since *William* the Conqueror.

But her determining all her Designs in the real Good, Glory and Profit of her People, she cannot be call'd a Tyrant—

But if She was in any thing tyrannical more than ordinary, it was in Matters of Religion, and some Blood is laid to her Door on that Account; of which since I can say nothing to defend it, I shall say nothing at all.

Her Successor, tho' bred a Presbyterian, and sworn to the National Covenant, yet fond of the Pomp and Splendor of the *Regale*, and reckoning himself in the Place of God Almighty as to the Sovereignty of the Conscience, carry'd the severe Injunction of Uniformity to the highest Pitch possible.

And now as all violent Methods in Religion tend to the Detriment and the lessening their Influence, that practise them; so under the Severities of these two Reigns, pretending the necessary Uniformity of the Church, the great Defection from the Church was procur'd, which has so long embarrass'd us on both sides.

For the Number of those that objected against the imposing the Ceremonies, daily increas'd, the Reasons, they gave, were so specious, so clear, direct, and deduc'd from Scripture, that no body could oppose them; They alledg'd,

1. That it was every Christian's Duty to worship GOD in that Way, which he did believe to be the most agreeable to his Will revealed in the Scripture.
2. That it was not in the Power of the civil Magistrate to make things in the Worship of GOD necessary, which were otherwise indifferent.

Thus the whole Plea was Purity of Worship, and from hence the People were call'd *Puritans*; and tho' the Name was given in Derision, yet the blameless Lives, extraordinary Charity, good Works, and general Character of the People in their Conversation, grew to such a Reputation, that it soon ceas'd to be a Reproach, and 'tis a Name reverenc'd both abroad and at home, and



of whom *Erasmus* left this famous Expression, speaking of the several Sects of Professors of the Protestant Religion.

*Sit Anima mea cum Puritanis Anglicanis.*

But I shall enlarge on the Characters and History of these honest persecuted People in the next Paper.

## MISCELLANEA.

I Am now to relate you the Behaviour of the Debtor and Creditor before the Judge; When the poor Man stood upon his Discharge, four Creditors only oppos'd him out of 140 and upwards, the Debt of those Four amounted, as I remember, to under 2000*l.* out of near 17000*l.* which he ow'd, and the Act said expressly, that where two thirds in Number and Value of any Man's Creditors agreed to and executed any Agreement, Composition, &c. the rest should be concluded, and the Prisoner be discharged.

Three of the four Creditors appear'd by their Lawyers or Attorneys, and these argued against the Forms of the Agreement, produc'd and endeavour'd to find some Defect in the Instrument, and on this Head they argued Matters of Law very vigorously a great while—— At last, when they found the Judge seem'd to incline to discharge the Man, and that most of their Arguments were answer'd, they began to argue more directly against the real discharging him as such; and then the fourth Creditor fell in with them, and falling foul of the poor Man, with all the ill Language and Reproaches he could, press'd the Judge with Entreaties, that he might not be discharged.

The Judge heard him with Abundance of Temper and Patience, tho' it was easie to perceive, he was a little mov'd at his malicious Fury; but when the Harangue against the poor Man was over, his Lordship stood up, and turning to the Lawyers—— Said to this Purpose—— Gentlemen, I have nothing to say to you, but by way of Answer to your Arguments; I do not blame you, for you only appear for your Clients, and act by their Direction: But Sir, says the Judge, I cannot be a little surpriz'd at you, and

desire to ask you a few Questions, and then began the Dialogue I have spoke of.

Pray, Sir, says the Judge, how much does this Man owe you?

Creditor. Above 70*l.* and please your Lordship.

Judge. Have you prosecuted him at Law?

Cr. Yes, my Lord.

Judge. Up to Execution I suppose?

Cr. Yes, my Lord.

Judge. Is he a Prisoner now at your Suit?

Cr. Yes, my Lord.

Judge. Pray, how long has he been so?

Cr. Above twelve Year, my Lord.

Judge. And pray Sir, has his twelve Years Imprisonment made him more capable to pay you, than he was before?

Cr. I cannot tell that my Lord. *This was spoke after some Hesitation, and with Reluctance enough.*

Judge. But, Sir, do you really think, or is it probable, his being so long a Prisoner has enabled him, or help'd him onwards to be abler to pay you, than he was before?

Cr. I can't be positive in that, my Lord.

Judge. But, *what do you think*, is a Prison likely to do it?

Cr. I do not say it is, my Lord.

Judge. Why then would you keep him there any longer?

I cannot take in the whole Issue of this Dialogue here, and therefore I reserve the rest till the next Paper; I assure the Reader, tho' 'tis not possible for me to be exact in the very Words spoken, I as little as possible vary from the Substance, nor will I in the least make the Creditor speak more foolishly or ridiculously, no, nor more maliciously than he did.

A D V E R -